ACTION
is assigned to

LATVIAN LEGATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Delivered by Messenger August 24, 1950 5:30 P.M. V. Johnson

August 24, 1950

Sir:

Supplementing my previous communications in regard to forcible mobilization of Latvians during the German occupation of Latvia from 1941 to 1945, I wish to submit the following information.

Soon after the German occupation of Latvia in summer of 1941, the former Latvian police, who had been dismissed when the Soviet forces were in occupation, were called up. Then the units of the Latvian Civic Guards were called upon to guard bridges, factories and warehouses, and to combat criminal elements in the country. To strengthen internal security arrangements, each rural community /there were 600 of them/ was forced to provide a certain number of men and to send them to the places indicated, with the promise, later broken, that they would remain in the country. In addition, unemployed young people were asked to register with units of the Latvian auxiliary police for one year's service only. All these

The Honorable
Dean Acheson,
Secretary of State,
Department of State,
Washington 25, D.C.

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UNA/R Adviser on Refugees and Displaced Persons
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enrolments were simply a camouflaged form of mobilization.

On December 19, 1941, the German occupying authorities introduced compulsory labor /Arbeitspflicht/ in Latvia, which gave them full control over all the men in the country. Those who had registered for only one year in the Latvian auxiliary police, the members of the Civic Guards, the former Latvian police, and the guards supplied by the communities were thus unable to leave their units, which were employed by the Germans even outside the country, in spite of their promise, and were later sent to the front.

On finishing their high school course, young Latvians had to join the German labor service /Reichsarbeitsdienst/ - their diplomas contained an entry to that effect - whence they were automatically sent to the German army, without being consulted. Other young men were induced into the service by the false promise that they would thus be exempt from the military service later. Often young people were simply seized on the streets and put into the auxiliary police units.

On February 10, 1943, Hitler signed the decree

setting up "the Latvian Volunteer SS Legion", of which not a single Latvian had any knowledge beforehand, and the occupying power at once proceeded with mobilization. The officers who had been registered a long time before, were drafted first by means of individual orders, beginning early in 1943. In February/May, 1943, all men born in the years 1919-1924 were drafted. The next mobilization of officers and NCOs of all ages, and of men born in the years 1915-1924, took place on November 9, 1943. Mobilization continued with the draft, on January, 1944, of men born in the years 1906-1915; in August/September, 1944, all categories of men born in the years 1906-1926 were mobilized, and in the summer of 1944, even boys born in 1927 and 1928 were drafted and sent immediately to Germany for service as Air force auxiliaries. There is hardly any need to add that the mobilization orders were accompanied by the usual threats that persons who disobeyed them would be court martialed.

The February/March, 1943 conscription was by far the largest ever carried out in Latvia at any time. It covered those born 1919-~~1934~~ 1924, and it yielded close

Correction called in by 1st Secy. Driskoll

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to 60.000 men inducted, at the discretion of the Nazi German occupant, into various branches of service. In this connection it should be noted that the individual conscriptee had no choice whatever in the matter of his assignment to any particular branch of the service, or in the matter of the name or appelation given this service by the Nazi invader.

The November 1943 mobilization covered those born in 1915-1919, but the years 1919-1924 were also included in the mobilization orders of November, 1943, to include the considerable number of Latvians who had evaded the February-March 1943 mobilization, and who had under one pretext or another obtained postponements of induction.

The mobilization of November 1943 yielded only around 5000 men, or approximately 8 per cent of the number inducted into various services under the February-March 1943 mobilization.

Thus the Latvians, who during the German occupation were in one way or other connected with the German army or similar units, actually had been mobilized. In 1941-1942 this mobilization was camouflaged, but as of February

1943, it was ouvert and general.

According to information received by this Legation, a distinction has been made with reference to the admission of former Latvian Legionnaires under Public Law 774, as follows :

> Latvians inducted into military service prior to October 1943, are to be unconditionally excluded. Latvians inducted into military service after October 1943, to be conditionally admitted.

I wish to state most emphatically that to make a distinction between the compulsory character of the Nazi mobilizations in Latvia prior to October 1943, and those after that date, would be completely unjustified and unwarranted.

An arbitrary date line of October 1943, as reported under consideration with reference to the admissibility of former Latvian Legionnaires under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, as amended, would exclude without basis or warrant, over 90 per cent of Latvians forcibly impressed into service by the Nazi occupant of Latvia. This arbitrary unjustified distinction would work a grave injustice upon the Latvian displaced persons affected by this ruling, and it would compromize elementary principles of justice.

The former Latvian Legionnaires are innocent victims of foreign aggression. As displaced persons they have lived in uncertainty, faced not infrequently with hostility and lack of understanding for their plight. Their immigration cases under the Public Law 774 have been pending in many instances for a year and even more.

One has to bear in mind that the first general mobilization in Latvia took place in February 1945. Even the directives of the IRO on the eligibility of Balts /Provisional Order No. 42, Appendix V, Para. 4/ states :

> "Baltic nationals who started military service before the first compulsory conscription in January 1943, should be regarded as volunteers, ineligible unless they give proof to the contrary. Others should be regarded as draftees, and are not excluded by clause 2 /b/ of Part II.

During my stay in Geneva as the Latvian Liaison Officer with the IRO, I have repeatedly protested against this decision, as I do not deem it right to consider volunteers those Latvians, whom the German occupational authorities had induced into their services before they proclaimed the open mobilization.

I also have been informed that difficulties are being made to the immigration to the United States to those

Latvian displaced persons who had been in Latvian Home Guards prior to the World War II. The latter organization was established during the first years of Latvia's independence. It was non-political, consisting of Latvian youth for defending the independence of Latvia, similar to the Finnish Schutzkorps. No political tendencies against the United States Government may be ascribed to this patriotic organization.

In a similar unjustified manner, the medical personnel of the Latvian Legion is prevented from entering the United States.

In conclusion I wish to state that

/1/ the Latvian displaced persons - former soldiers or officers were forcibly mobilized, first by devious processes, but as of February 1943, by an open mobilization;

/2/ the Latvian former soldiers and officers have never belonged to any political movement hostile to the United States or to its form of Government;

/3/ the so-called "Latvian Legion" was purely a combat unit, which was stationed all the time in the front fighting the Bolsheviks, and which never was sent

either to guard Nazi concentration camps or to fulfill any other assignments in the rear;

/c/ above all, not a single Latvian soldier or officer of the Latvian Legion has participated in any political or racial executions carried out or directed by the German authorities.

The last statement is based on the following considerations.

/a/ The racial executions occurred in Latvia in the fall of 1941, and in the first half of 1942, yet the Latvian Legion was formed in 1943.

/b/ The political and racial execution was carried out by German officials and the Sicherheitsdienst-maenner, who were not subject to mobilization order, and consequently could not be enlisted in the Legion.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

J. Feldmans
Minister Plenipotentiary
Charge d'Affaires of Latvia